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More, Pope, Swift: The Use of English Satire within the Intellectual Historical Narrative
(1516 - 1726)

A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History and for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts in English

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May 2020

Abstract

This paper traces the use of satire as a literary form in England from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. By analyzing three major English satirical writings from the 16th through 18th centuries, this paper unites literature and intellectual history, illustrating how literary analysis provides deeper insight into the progressive relationship between these two major eras in intellectual history. The paper provides a literary criticism of the genre of satire; the use of irony, humor, and exaggeration to criticize one's vices, often relating to politics. First, the paper explores major concepts and themes of satire during the Renaissance period. Thomas More's book *Utopia* is utilized as an example of Renaissance satire, emphasizing individualism and humanism present in the era. Second, Alexander Pope's poem, "The Rape of the Lock," is closely read in order to depict the major differences between Renaissance and early Enlightenment societal criticisms. Finally, Johnathan Swift's book *Gulliver's Travels* is used to further depict the use of the genre in the latter portion of the Enlightenment movement, ultimately illustrating the progression of the literary genre in relation to societal and political events. This paper concludes with the assertion that through analyzing satire, historians can learn about social and political events prevalent in each era. The conditions under which these works were produced illustrate the intellectual history of the English Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Acknowledgements

As I am completing this thesis, our world is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this uncertain time, I would not have had the strength and motivation to complete my work to its fullest capability without the support of many important figures in my life.

First, I would like to thank my family and friends for their sustained support. From helping me brainstorm thesis ideas, comforting me in times of being “stuck” on my topic, to encouraging me to finish strong. I would specifically like to thank my father for always believing in me throughout my years in my undergraduate program, and providing me space and comfort to finish this project from home during this shelter-in-place mandate. I also want to thank my great aunt, Genevieve. Her generosity and belief in my academic and career goals always motivated me to be the best version of myself, and without her love and support my dreams would not be a reality.

Second, I would like to thank my professors for their tireless work with me on this project. Dr. Cynthia Taylor and Professor Carlos Rodriguez advised me every step of the way, helping me solidify my thesis, strengthen my argument, and truly understand the process of creating a work at this level. I would also like to thank Dr. Jordan Lieser and Dr. Perry Guevara for their guidance throughout my undergraduate career, culminating in this final project.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, who passed away during my sophomore year in 2018. Without her love and guidance, I would not be where I am today.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methods and Context.....	4
- Establishing Intellectual History	4
- Satire: A Literary Criticism.....	4
- English Literature.....	5
- Renaissance: A Brief Overview.....	5
- Enlightenment: A Brief Overview.....	6
Satire and the Renaissance	7
Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i>	11
- Historical Context and Biography.....	12
- Analytical Reading	13
Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock".....	16
- Historical Context and Biography.....	17
- Analytical Reading.....	17
Jonathan Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	19
- Historical Context and Biography.....	20
- Analytical Reading	21
Conclusion.....	24

Introduction

While I have always been passionate about history, I became interested in Renaissance European studies during my freshman year of my undergraduate career. Throughout the past four years, I have extensively researched society, economy, art, and literature in the fourteenth through sixteenth century Europe. My research experiences have led to my findings of greater interest in societal life: how daily life functioned, the life of working class, and the role of women in the Renaissance. This led to my interest in the intellectual history of Early Modern Europe. I aim to explore “how” and “why” people thought the way in which they did; how did external factors influence their ways of thinking? The task of narrowing down my thesis topic was daunting, yet I am confident in my final decision; analyzing the use of literature as a tool for studying intellectual history.

After studying at the University of Oxford for the fall semester of my junior year, the history of England grasped my interest. England is a fascinating nation with a rich historical background in which I intend to explore in further research projects. When narrowing this project down, I decided to focus on the nation of England specifically during the early modern era in order to gain a new perspective on my overall knowledge of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. I have primarily focused on Central Europe in past research, and found this to be a great opportunity to broaden my understanding of the era. English literature has always been my favorite region to study, and I was excited to re-visit some of the works I was exposed to in previous years.

My interest in satire had always been present, notably throughout my studies of Shakespeare’s greatest works, but did not become a prominent interest of mine until spring semester of my junior year. I began to question how satire has evolved from earlier times, and

what the genre truly entails. I did not know much about the history or uses of satire, and desired to broaden my understanding of this fascinating genre of literature. This project gave me the opportunity to explore how satire was used in early modern England, along with allowing me to compare how the genre has progressed throughout the eras. It has been incredibly interesting to learn about the uses of satire in Early Modern Europe in comparison to the current day uses of the genre.

My passion for the study of history has grown immensely since my first year of undergraduate study. While I am still passionate about studying English language and literature, the field of history has captured my academic interest. I aimed for my senior thesis to capture my passion for both literature and history in a way that was clearly related. Thus, analyzing the intellectual history of early modern England became the main focus of my work. Through my literary analysis of three major satirical works, I provide an example of how literature impacts and greatly adds to the overall narrative of the intellectual history of a specific era; this project focusing on the Early Modern era.

The root ideas of this project began in my sophomore year at Dominican in my historiography class; how the study of literature directly impacts the study of history. I want the connection between the two fields of study I focus upon to be clearly detailed for the reader. It has always been extremely important to me for readers to understand that studying literature is essential for fully understanding an event or era in history. I aim for my senior thesis to depict this relationship through the literary analysis of satirical works.

My goal after graduating from Dominican is to enter a PhD program for early modern European studies. I intend to further my research on the Renaissance era, and utilize my research from this project in every way possible. For my dissertation, I aim to explore how day-to-day

civilization behaved and evolved throughout Central Europe in the 14th century. I seek to directly address the impact of the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1347. I have researched this topic for a previous project, and intend on expanding my research extensively. I aim to focus on the direct social impact of the major outbreak, providing an analysis of societal norms before and after the outbreak. I will explore topics such as religious impact, daily interaction, and interpretation of thought; thus, my focus on intellectual history in the Early Modern era will greatly assist me in my graduate school studies. The Renaissance era is important to me, and has thoroughly captured my attention throughout my undergraduate career. I greatly look forward to deepening my understanding of the era, and all that comes with the social and cultural history of Renaissance Europe. My senior thesis underwent many trials and errors in the early research phases, and I am truly proud of the final product.

Before reading my thesis, I outline the uses and definitions of “intellectual history” and “satire” for my reader. My aim is to provide clarity and a brief understanding of the topics that will be explored within my work prior to delving into the bulk of my project. The following sections will establish a general understanding of how I aim to analyze and utilize intellectual history and the literary genre of satire.

Establishing Intellectual History

Intellectual history is a field of study pertaining to the study of ideas, intellectuals, and how individuals thought the way in which they did.¹ While this is an incredibly broad description, there are many angles in which historians can approach the field. Intellectual history is often marginal to the historical discipline in which it is being explored.² Within this thesis, intellectual history will be pertaining to the “how” and the “why” individuals thought the way they did; what influenced their ways of thinking, whether it be specific events or societal norms. In addition, the field of intellectual history encompasses the specific study of ideas. This thesis will focus precisely on following the progression and development of a single literary concept; satire. The progression and relationship to historical events occurring in England during the time of publishing each work will be addressed. One major source utilized within my thesis is Richard Whatmore and Brian Young’s book entitled *A Companion to Intellectual History*, in which the two authors analyze the discipline as a whole, explaining what “intellectual history” is, along with discussing the state of the art. The book pays close attention to controversies that have arisen in the field, along with changes over the decades in the way “intellectual history” is defined.

Satire: A Literary Criticism

The genre of satire is commonly assumed to pertain to commenting on political or social events in a humorous manner, yet identifying issue with the event. Rather, this thesis will view

¹ Gordon, Peter. 2013. What is Intellectual History? A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field. Harvard University. Accessed January 25, 2020.

² Samuel Moyn, Andrew Sartori, and Andrew Sartori. 2013. *Global Intellectual History*. Columbia Studies in International and Global History. New York: Columbia University Press.

the literary genre of satire as an “idea” expressed through literature. As historian Dustin Griffin states in his work, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, “If satire is not viewed simply as derisive reduction and rejection, if we broaden our conception... to include inquiry and provocation, play and display, anything from Menippean fantasy to learned anatomizing, then we can find satire's mark not just presented in satiric set pieces... but woven into the fabric of several different varieties of the novel.”³ Through interpreting satire as an idea, or way of thinking, the relationship between intellectual history and the genre of satire can be clearly outlined. While it is understood that satire can hold many uses, this definition directly connecting thought with the genre must be recognized when analyzing my arguments presented within this project.

English Literature

There are two ways in which English literature is defined; either of the English language, or originating from England itself. Thomas More and Alexander Pope are from England, whilst Jonathan Swift is originally from Ireland, although he spent a fair amount of time in England. Thus, the works being analyzed in this thesis are “English” in the sense of the language, but do not all originate from England.

The Renaissance: A Brief Overview

The Renaissance is defined as an era of “rebirth” in Europe, specifically in the areas of art, culture, politics, and economics, following the Middle Ages.⁴ It is widely viewed as originating in Italy during the mid 14th century, and lasts until approximately the late 1600s,

³ Dustin Griffin. 1994. *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. Accessed January 26, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁴“Renaissance.” 2020. *HISTORY*.

when the shift to Enlightenment ideals became more prevalent. The cultural movement of “humanism” began during the Renaissance, and continued on through the Age of Enlightenment; commonly known as the Enlightenment Era. It is important to note that many scholars argue that the Renaissance humanist movement was separate from the scientific movement altogether.⁵ This paper will focus on the humanist and cultural movement rather than the scientific movement. Although the era is often viewed in its entirety, there are prominent differences between beginning, middle, and end of the assumed time. Thus, the term “High Renaissance” directly refers to approximately 1500-1540, in which art and Renaissance ideals were at its peak.

The Enlightenment: A Brief Overview

The Enlightenment era directly followed the Renaissance in Europe, dating from approximately the end of the 17th century until early 19th century, after the conclusion of the French Revolution.⁶ It is known as the “Age of Reason,” in which intellect and cultural development thrived. Enlightenment thinkers believed in rational change, leading to a great variety of findings in literature, science, and politics. It has also been described as a “set of attitudes” rather than a true event.⁷ The Enlightenment era, also known as the Age of Enlightenment, is credited to have influenced the American and French Revolutions.

⁵ Angelo Mazzocco. 2006. *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*. Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

⁶ “Enlightenment.” 2020. *HISTORY*.

⁷ Ronald S. Love. *The Enlightenment*. Westport: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2008.

The relationship between literature and history is often explored and questioned. Some argue that literature is not a reliable source when studying a specific history. They argue that literature is art; it is a fabrication, holding no truth to the events in which it depicts. When broadly viewing literature as a whole, this may be accurate to a degree. Yet, when applying a specific scope to each work of literature, it serves as an incredibly useful tool into the intellectual history of an era. Individuals of any era express their thoughts and interest through writing, thus, creating an accountable work that serves as a “snapshot” into their mindset. This is a direct and essential tool for intellectual historians to utilize when researching a specific period of time.

Satire has been utilized as an effective blend of creativity and intellect throughout history. The use of humor in societies and cultures has always been incredibly essential to the daily lives of humans, and the proper delivery of humor was considered a skill.⁸ According to author Gilbert Highet, “[Satire] pictures real men and women, often in lurid colors, but always with unforgettable clarity. It uses the bold and vivid language of its own time, eschewing stale clichés and dead conventions. Where other patterns of literature tend sometimes to be formal and remote, satire is free, easy, and direct.”⁹ Through the flexibility of the genre, authors had a form of expression that could not be denied. In addition, the genre of satire benefits from the fictional perspective it can take in regards to studying the intellectual history in relation to the genre. “The construction of an imagined speaker opens various ways by which satire can seem to interpret its historical context independently...The indirection of satire thus arises from the complexity of the

⁸ Paul Simpson. 2003. *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humor*. Linguistic Approaches to Literature. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

⁹ Gilbert Highet. *Anatomy of Satire*. Vol. Paperback edition. Princeton Legacy Library. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972.

interpretive situation it seeks to address: if matters were clear, there would be little reason to express them indirectly.”¹⁰

The Renaissance era was a time of “rebirth,” as ways of thinking shifted drastically from spirituality to individualism. In regards to satire during the Renaissance, scholar Ruben Quintero details how Renaissance writings incorporated classic satiric dimensions. “Renaissance satire is... an epitome of the period in which it came to life; nearly every cliché that defines the period is applicable to its satire. Native elements and elements of a classical revival have joint shares in its origins and growth; it offers here and there claims of innovation even as it acknowledges its debts to the past.”¹¹ In addition, the use of metaphor was prevalent in early Renaissance writings, and also used as a means of expressing opinions in regards to the social and political climate.¹² The Renaissance era solidified the movement towards individualism, ultimately serving as the beginning of the movement to modernity. According to historian Christinana Purdy Moudarres, “What brought about the discovery were new ways of thinking that had the power of turning ancient utopian dreams and longings into a reality. More specifically, it was the Renaissance of the Quattrocento, in the totality of its manifestation, that lay the foundations and opened up the horizon of a new modern culture and the invention of a new world.”¹³

This rise in the individual led to the Enlightenment era; a period of time in which religion and spiritualism was questioned as humanism spread drastically across Europe. This age is deeply rich in intellectual history, with many ways to explore and understand the ways in which intellectuals thought and interpreted events occurring within their daily lives. Writings and

¹⁰ Charles A. Knight. 2004. *The Literature of Satire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Ruben Quintero. ed. *A Companion to Satire : Ancient and Modern*. Williston: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2006.

¹² Irene Fantappiè, Helmut Pfeiffer, and Tobias Roth. 2017. *Renaissance Rewritings*. Transformationen Der Antike. Berlin: De Gruyter.

¹³ Christiana Purdy Moudarres. *New Worlds and the Italian Renaissance : Contributions to the History of European Intellectual Culture*. Leiden: BRILL, 2012.

literature were a major form of art in Early Modern Europe, spreading rapidly via translations throughout Central Europe. Specifically, literature from England served as examples of intellectually rich works of art that influenced Europe as a whole. One genre that became utilized more frequently during this era was that of satire. Whilst satire had existed prior to the rise of individualism, the Renaissance inspired intellectuals to utilize the genre more openly. Thus, the genre of satire began a transformation of its own; from a way of vocalizing a critique to that of expressing ones' ideas.

More, Pope, Swift: The Use of English Satire within the Intellectual Historical Narrative
(1516 - 1726)

Although literature is often considered to be a form of art intended for leisure, the use of literature to study the intellectual history of an era is essential to fully understanding the way in which humanity and society functioned. The genre of satire has existed for centuries, dating back to ancient Greek and Roman times. Through analyzing the evolution of satire from 15th through 18th century England, historians can gain a clear understanding of the major ideals and intellect that thrived. Thomas More's *Utopia* distinctly depicts society in a way that alludes to the humanist movement occurring in the early sixteenth century. Alexander Pope's poem, "The Rape of the Lock," used satire to comment on social criticisms facing England during the early Enlightenment. Finally, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* comments on the standing of England's societal pressures as the Enlightenment era was at its peak. This assertion aims to detail the importance of literature when aiming to understand the intellectual history of an era through a specific study of the progression of the use of satire as a means of commentary on societal conflict through early modern England.

The Renaissance era itself covers a wide range of dates and events occurring in Europe. The term "High Renaissance" represents a time in which individualism and creativity was at its peak. The term generally refers to the 30-year period of exceptional artwork and artistry in Italy, yet, the High Renaissance was also experienced outside of Italy as well, in varying ways.¹⁴ The humanist movement began to grow during the high Renaissance, eventually leading to the Enlightenment era. Humanism is defined as, "A progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of

¹⁴ "High Renaissance Movement Overview and Analysis". 2020.

personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good.”¹⁵ While there are many aspects that affect humanism, art is considered an “inspiration” for the philosophy. Renaissance Europe saw a great rise in humanists, and a greater desire for knowledge about the philosophy. The relationship between art, culture, and humanism was increasingly strengthened as the Renaissance era came to a close, and the age of Enlightenment began. Thus, the art of literature was greatly affected by the rise of the humanist movement.

In England, the social climate evolved towards furthering the individual, moving away from “group-thinking” and embracing each idea. While this may be true, Thomas More greatly motioned towards speaking out about his beliefs through using satire within his work, *Utopia*, as a means of expressing his true thoughts on the status of society and humanism in England.

Thomas More’s *Utopia*, originally published in 1516, is a political and social satire that has been explored greatly in the world of intellectual history. The work idealizes and expresses a “perfect” society, via two major chapters within the book. The first chapter of the book is centered around an analytical discussion between More and varying scholars, whereas the second chapter focuses on a description of “Utopia” itself. The book includes four main “characters;” Peter Giles, Raphael Hythloday, Amerigo Vespucci, and Thomas More himself. All characters are actual figures that associated with More himself, ultimately blending a real conversation with satirical elements.

The premise of the book is a conversation between the characters, with Hythloday, a world traveler and philosopher, sharing his traveling experiences with Vespucci. Specifically, Hythloday shares his objections to English law at the time, and uses a Utopian society’s regulations as a model of what England should follow. Hythloday details the daily life of

¹⁵ “Definition Of Humanism - American Humanist Association.” 2019. *American Humanist Association*.

Utopian society, along with their ways of thinking and specific laws. In the end, More ultimately opposes Hythloday's ideas regarding Utopian laws, and sides with the current ways in which England operates.

Thomas More lived from 1478 to 1535, and served as an English lawyer, Catholic martyr (this title officially emerging during the English counter-reformation), and was a prominent figure in the humanist movement.¹⁶ In 1521, King Henry VIII officially knighted More. He resided in London, becoming heavily involved with the growing humanist movement. According to Baker-Smith, More's role within the English legal system is what initially prompted him to begin writing *Utopia*, published in 1516. In 1535, Thomas More was beheaded for treason, after years of refusing to support the campaign of King Henry and his separation from his wife, Katherine of Aragon.¹⁷ During the High Renaissance, More's career as a lawyer was thriving, and he was a member of Parliament. In addition, More was a citizen of the humanist Republic of Letters, and, according to historian Hanan Yoran, "Thomas More stands out as the most profound thinker, not least because he attempted, in his polemics against Erasmus's enemies, to provide a theoretical grounding for his friend's broad vision and heterogeneous intellectual production."¹⁸

Thomas More's ways of thinking varied drastically throughout his life, leading some to believe that there were multiple "Thomas Mores" using the same name. "Revisionist scholars focus on More as the author of polemical tracts against Protestantism to 'reintroduce a healthy dose of skepticism and irreverence concerning More's conscience and actions.' Because of the

¹⁶ Dominic Baker-Smith. "Thomas More", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hanan Yoran. 2010. *Between Utopia and Dystopia: Erasmus, Thomas More, and the Humanist Republic of Letters*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books.

attention given to Utopia and humanism, More as a controversialist seems inexplicable. How could the urbane, witty advocate of social justice from Utopia be the same person who burned heretics? In this manner, the “two Mores” theory emerges. In effect, there are two men— one humanist and another cunning councilor and chancellor, a hardened hammer of heretics.”¹⁹

Through reading More’s work, scholars were able to understand More’s ways of thinking and opinion on political and societal issues. Thus, through his writings, an intellectual history of the Renaissance can be identified.

One recurring topic found in Thomas More’s *Utopia* is the topic of happiness, and how to “correctly” achieve it. While it is mentioned several times throughout the text, More utilizes one discussion to directly satirize the Church versus humanist movement.

“[The Utopians] never discuss happiness without joining to their philosophical rationalism certain principles of religion. Without these religious principles, they think that reason is bound to prove weak and defective in its efforts to investigate true happiness.”²⁰

Through analyzing this primary quote, one can argue that on a surface level, the text is emphasizing the importance of religion in regards to one’s happiness. The phrasing of “weak” and “defective” create a harsh and negative tone for the reader, thus, emphasizing the importance of following the Church. This directly satirizes the humanist movement, pushing away from following the Church, and following the individual.

¹⁹ Travis Curtright. *The One Thomas More*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012.

²⁰ Thomas More. *Utopia*. Translated by Clarence H. Miller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Another important term used within this text is “rationalism;” something that becomes incredibly prominent in the Age of Enlightenment. Through combining philosophy and rationalism, More brings together both “sides” of the discourse; the Church and the humanists. Although the quote seemingly states that one cannot celebrate happiness without the Church and “religious principles,” More is utilizing satire to convey his own thought; one can be a happy and successful individual without the direct involvement Church.

Historian Walter M. Gordon explains in detail within the book, *Renaissance and Reformation*, how More directly addresses religion through Utopia. “More, in one sense, is calling a particular Monk back to a spirit peculiar to monasticism, but the full import of what he says there reaches beyond the abbey back to creation itself and then to the beginnings of Christianity. He holds that God, in his providence, established all the good things of his making for all people... and that Christ, ‘endeavored to urge men to turn away from provincial interests back to universal interests.’”²¹ This aspect of More’s ideas presented within the text illustrate a movement towards “universal interests,” with individualism not being highlighted. Yet, through the mention of God establishing good things for “all good people,” it becomes clear that More believes God intended for a further individualist mindset. Although seemingly a “threat” to the established order of the Church, More’s beliefs and actions initiated an intellectual shift.²²

The second book within More’s *Utopia* describes the perfect world, existing in the form of a singular island discovered during a voyage. The main social movement being satirized in this work is the humanist movement that occurred in the early 1500s across Europe. This can

²¹ Walter M Gordon. "Thomas More's "Utopia": Preface to Reformation." *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme*, New Series / Nouvelle Série, 21, no. 3 (1997): 63-79.

²² Euan Cameron. *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History*. Oxford: OUP Oxford, 1999.

both be seen as a political and social event, as it greatly impacted civilian's relationships with the church.

In his second book, More closed with his thoughts on the "Utopian way of life" described within the text.

"My chief objection [to the Utopian way of life] was to the basis of their whole system, that is, their communal living and their moneyless economy. This one thing alone utterly subverts all the nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty which [...] are the true ornaments and glory of a commonwealth."²³

In one of his closing statements, More reveals that he does not agree fully with the "ideal" life detailed throughout the work. Rather, he finds the concept of a moneyless economy impractical. This again directly highlights the intellectual standpoint regarding rationality versus irrationality. Although rationality became a more common idea in the Age of Enlightenment, More outlines the progression of the concept from Renaissance era to Enlightenment era European culture.

Furthermore, in this excerpt More explains how a moneyless economy would subvert high praises such as "nobility, magnificence, splendor," and "majesty" and they would be the truest form of praise, without the use of material goods. This again aligns with Renaissance ideals, as class status played an important role throughout the era. More states that a moneyless economy would ruin this system, as material goods were essential to wealth and high praise during the era. Without money and material goods, these class statuses would not exist to the same degree.

²³ Thomas More. *Utopia*. Translated by Clarence H. Miller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

More's novel *Utopia* outlines social and political changes present in the English Renaissance. The novel defines aspirations More found to be important for England specifically. More's ideas and ways of thinking can clearly be identified within his writings, and he made very clear the issues in which he aimed to address. As historian Christopher Kendrick stated, "Yet the literary distance that distinguishes *Utopia* is rather more upon than from its environment. *Utopia* does a great deal to indicate the sociopolitical situation of its authorship... This not only enhances the uncanny quality of *Utopia*; it surely speaks of whence it comes."²⁴

Satire in the Enlightenment era varied from that of the Renaissance, yet still contained the key idea of individualism that was found in More's *Utopia*. Through the Enlightenment era, many major works were published, including Alexander Pope's poem "The Rape of the Lock," and Jonathan Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels*.

Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" was published in full in 1717, serving as an early Enlightenment work of literature. The poem satirizes societal criticisms that plagued England during the Enlightenment, serving as a "social satire." The poem satirizes an interaction within an aristocratic setting in the 18th century, relying heavily on gender stereotypes as aristocratic women argue over men. The poem includes the characters of Ariel, Belinda, The Baron, and Clarissa. Ariel, Belinda's guardian sylph, warns Belinda in her dreams of a great misfortune or loss that will occur to her. Belinda ignores this warning, not thinking much of it, and attends a social gathering with many guests.

The Baron, one of the guests, decides he wishes to cut off and steal a lock of Belinda's hair. On his third try, the Baron, with the help of Clarissa, successfully steals the lock of hair. Belinda is furious, and eventually begins to fight with the Baron and Clarissa to regain the lock.

²⁴ Christopher Kendrick. *Utopia, Carnival, and Commonwealth in Renaissance England*, University of Toronto Press, 2004.

During the struggle, the lock of hair is ultimately lost, never to be returned. The poem ends with the poet consoling Belinda, and telling her that the lock of hair will live amongst the stars forever. “This *Lock* the Muse shall consecrate to fame / And ‘midst the stars inscribe *Belinda’s* name!”²⁵

Alexander Pope was a poet who lived from 1649 to 1744 during the Formalism poetry movement.²⁶ Pope was self-taught and described as “ambitious,” learning French, Greek, Latin, and Italian under his own accord at a young age. He began writing poetry at the age of 12, and was first recognized as a poet after being published at 16. Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock” secured his status as a well-known poet, and is his most popular work. Pope always showed a keen interest in societal and political events, ultimately fueling his ambition to provide commentary on movements and satirize the way in which society was becoming. It is important to note that Pope and Jonathan Swift worked closely together, and co-authored the work *Miscellanies*.²⁷

“Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast
“When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last.”²⁸

Pope satirizes the wealthy, and turning a minor inconvenience into a greater one; ultimately commenting on the individualist movement in proximity to the church. This ties into Jonathan Swift’s use of satire within his work, *Gulliver’s Travels*, which also serves as an example of satire being used to convey a social or political event in history, allowing for historians to learn of the intellectual history pertaining to the era. In this specific quote, Pope

²⁵ Alexander Pope and Aubrey Beardsley. *The Rape of the Lock*. London: Vintage Classic, 2007.

²⁶ "About Alexander Pope | Academy Of American Poets". 2020. *Poets.Org*.

²⁷ "Alexander Pope: A Brief Biography". 2020. *Victorianweb.Org*.

²⁸ Alexander Pope and Aubrey Beardsley. *The Rape of the Lock*. London: Vintage Classic, 2007.

comments on the social norm of the rich having pets. However, the speaker, Belinda, considers her husband and her dog to be equals.

In Canto I, Pope clearly outlines the way in which women versus men will be depicted and discussed accordingly;

“Of these am I, who thy Protection claim,
A watchful Sprite, and *Ariel* is my name.
Late, as I rang’d the crystal Wilds of Air,
In the clear Mirror of thy ruling *Star*
I saw, alas! some dread Event impend,
Ere to the Main this morning’s Sun descend,
But Heav’n reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warn’d by the *Sylph*, oh pious Maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy Guardian can.
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!”²⁹

Ending the stanza with, “Beware of all, but most beware of Man!” can imply two things; man referring to humanity, or “man” referring to the gender. As this phrase is coming from a Sprite, not a human, it can be interpreted either way. As a social satire, Pope’s true meaning of “Man” was referring to the gender, as the sprite is warning the women of what she saw.

Furthermore, the couplet “But Heav’n reveals not what, or how, or where: // Warn’d by the *Sylph*, oh pious Maid, beware!” regards religion directly, as Heaven is referred to. This speaks to the religious social aspect found during the Enlightenment, with the further developed humanist movement gaining attention. The Sprite warns to beware of the “Dread event” that is to come in the future, and how Heaven did not tell the Sprite “what, how,” or “where.”

²⁹ Alexander Pope and Aubrey Beardsley. *The Rape of the Lock*. London: Vintage Classic, 2007.

Pope drew inspiration from various sources when writing “The Rape of the Lock.” In his review, Edward Bensly discussed Pope’s poem in relation to poet Aino Paleario’s work. “Pope’s interest in the Latin poems of the Italians and his obligations to Vida [Latin poet, humanist, and bishop]³⁰, for example, are well known. It is not improbable that in more than one place in ‘The Rape of the Lock,’ he was indebted to Aino Paleario’s *De Animorum Immortalitate*.”³¹ Bensly continued his argument through comparing the two works, highlighting the similarities between the two. This illustrates how society and other works influenced the way in which Pope created this work, and therefore, interpreted the events occurring in regards to humanism.

A main use of satire within Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock” is through over exaggeration of miniscule events. The poem is written as somewhat of an epic, with each Canto being incredibly dramatic for the reader to experience. Through the use of heroic couplets and Cantos, Pope sets the tone for the entirety of the work. Acting as a commentary on societal norms and the importance of money, Pope’s work allows the reader to understand what was of utmost importance to some during the Enlightenment. Yet, through his depiction, the reader can interpret Pope’s satire as a narrative on individualism, and the humanist movement itself.

Published in peak-Enlightenment times is Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, published in 1726. Swift’s work greatly satirizes the individualist movement, and the conflict with the church (similarly to Pope’s poem). *Gulliver’s Travels* follows the story of a surgeon named Lemuel Gulliver, whom travels to a variety of islands inhabited by very different species of creatures. The first island, Lilliput, is inhabited by people that are incredibly tiny, about 6 inches

³⁰ “Christiad — Marco Girolamo Vida”. 2020. *Hup.Harvard.Edu*.

³¹ Edward Bensly. “Pope’s ‘Rape of the Lock’.” *The Modern Language Review* 7, no. 1 (1912): 94-96.

in height. Gulliver helps the people of Lilliput defeat their enemy island, Blefuscu, before leaving both islands to return home to England.

After a short stint at home, Gulliver becomes stranded on the island of Brobdingnag. In contrast to Lilliput, this island is populated by giants, whom capture Gulliver and make a display of him for entertainment purposes, ultimately owning him. After being saved by an English vessel, Gulliver leaves England again to travel to the East Indies, ending up in a city in the clouds known as Laputa. The people in Laputa are particularly interested in theory and abstract thought. Below Laputa is the land of Balnibari, where intelligence and interest in theory are destroying the nation. During this same excursion, Gulliver visits Glubbubdrib and Luggnagg as well, before returning to England. The final destination in which is depicted within the text is a land Gulliver travels to in which the horses, called Houyhnhnms are intelligent, and the humans, called Yahoos, are primitive. Gulliver eventually settles down in this land, where he learns the culture, customs, and philosophy of the Houyhnhnms.

Jonathan Swift lived from 1667 to 1745, originating in Ireland. He spent many years in England, and eventually moved back to Dublin and served as Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral.³² Swift was a known satirist, often commenting on the social climate of England or Ireland. When Swift began working on *Gulliver's Travels*, he wrote to Alexander Pope stating he aimed to, "vex the world, not to divert it."³³ Swift contacted Pope again after completing the work, in which historian Peter Wagner details within his work, "Swift's Great Palimpsest: Intertextuality and Travel Literature in 'Gulliver's Travels'". "On September 29th 1725, shortly after completing the manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift wrote a letter to his friend Alexander Pope. In this frequently quoted document, the Dean declares his intense hatred of all man-made systems and

³² "Jonathan Swift | Poetry Foundation". 2020. *Poetry Foundation*.

³³ "Jonathan Swift: A Brief Biography". 2020. *Victorianweb.Org*.

organizations and also comments on the aims of his writing in general, and of *Gulliver's Travels* in particular.”³⁴ This offers insight into the mindset of Swift following the completion of his work. Through this source, a clear connection can be made between the impact of society on creative works. Thus, Swift's work holds as an example of intellectual history for the Enlightenment era. Swift, as all authors presumably do, wrote with a purpose and intention to share with his readers. His use of satire in *Gulliver's Travels* comments on Swift's desire to enlighten his readers.

The first passage in which Swift's satire in relation to his ideas can clearly be outlined is the incident in which the Houyhnhnms reveal their health capabilities.

“I told him, ‘we fed on a thousand things which operated contrary to each other; that we ate when we were not hungry, and drank without the provocation of thirst; that we sat whole nights drinking strong liquors, without eating a bit, which disposed us to sloth, inflamed our bodies, and precipitated or prevented digestion; that prostitute female *Yahoos* acquired a certain malady, which bred rottenness in the bones of those who fell into their embraces; that this, and many other diseases, were propagated from father to son; so that great numbers came into the world with complicated maladies upon them; that it would be endless to give him a catalogue of all diseases incident to human bodies.’”³⁵

Throughout this passage, the health of the Houyhnhnms is discussed; specifically, what they can and cannot tolerate. While this passage may appear to be out of place, Gulliver's belief that all illnesses can be traced back to being one's own fault, creates a new layer when reading

³⁴ Peter Wagner. “Swift's Great Palimpsest: Intertextuality and Travel Literature in ‘Gulliver's Travels’.” *Dispositio* 17, no. 42/43 (1992): 107-32.

³⁵ Jonathan Swift. 1667-1745. *Gulliver's Travels*. New York :Harper, 1950.

this passage. When applying Gulliver's belief, this becomes more of an intellectual reading rather than strictly medical. The quote uses the example of spreading illness "father to son," ultimately creating a chain reaction of illnesses always being passed down.

In addition, this passage can be interpreted in a non-literal sense. For example, the "illness" could refer to a way of thinking, or religion, that one appears to be stuck in. A cycle continues as a tradition or faith is passed from "father to son," ultimately not allowing for change. When considering the history of the Age of Enlightenment, there was a great deal of change occurring each day. Swift clearly satirizes the individualist movement via metaphor through the discussion of illnesses that are continually passed down each generation to generation.

In another section of the novel, the relationship between man and woman is explored. Specifically, Swift discusses marriage and expectations of each gender (regarding the Houyhnhnms).

"In their marriages, they are exactly careful to choose such colours as will not make any disagreeable mixture in the breed. Strength is chiefly valued in the male, and comeliness in the female; not upon the account of love, but to preserve the race from degenerating; for where a female happens to excel in strength, a consort is chosen, with regard to comeliness."³⁶

Taking this excerpt literally, the reader can clearly decipher the difference between men and women in regards to roles during marriage. Set characteristics, such as "strength" for men, are outlined. The statement, "not make any disagreeable mixture in the breed," is a powerful use of diction to directly address lineage, and the passing of traits on to each generation. Thus, the

³⁶ Jonathan Swift. 1667-1745. *Gulliver's Travels*. New York: Harper, 1950.

argument proposed in regards to the previous excerpt can be applied to this source as well. The theme of a cycle continuously comes up in Swift's work; through his satire, he breaks that cycle, just as the humanists and individualists were doing during the era.

Although it is only a decade of difference between the two works, it is important to capture multiple aspects of the Enlightenment as a whole. A singular decade made a huge difference in Enlightenment ideals and conflicts, which can be illustrated through the comparison of Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Pope and Swift utilize satire in different ways to discuss their viewpoints on the ongoing issue between individualists, humanists, and the church.

Conclusion

It is essential to utilize literature as a source when studying the intellectual history of a specific era. Throughout this thesis, it has been outlined through the specific example of the use of satire depicting the way in which authors were critically thinking during the European Renaissance and Enlightenment era. The three texts utilized in comparison were Thomas More's novel *Utopia* (1516), Alexander Pope's poem "The Rape of the Lock" (1717), and Jonathan Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Through satirical moments depicted in each respective text, the reader can clearly identify the ways in which the pressures of society were weighing on the author's work.

In Thomas More's *Utopia*, More utilizes his writing to detail his displeasure with the government through the satirical writings in which he tells the story of a perfect society. In the novel, his character appears to be displeased with the new ideas, and sides with the current direction in which English politics are going. Yet, this was a way for More to stay out of trouble after publication, whilst his true feelings are outlined through the character Hythloday's opinions. The satirical writings of Hythloday's descriptions, tone, and aggressive support for Utopia can be studied by historians as a way to understand the daily frustrations of civilians, such as More.

In Alexander Pope's poem "The Rape of the Lock," a movement towards humanism is also satirized. Pope takes a simple story and turns it into an "epic," in which emotions are heightened and dramatized. For example, a simple card game is turned into a vigorous battle between Belinda and the Baron through the power of language and word choice. The satirical tone of the poem is held strongly throughout the entirety of the work. Pope comments on the way

in which society is shifting during the rise of the Enlightenment era, coming out of the Renaissance ways of thinking.

In Jonathan Swift's book, *Gulliver's Travels*, the main character travels to many different societies that all differ vastly in ways of thinking. Although some societies are more appearance based, such as height, there are multiple islands that are distinctly based on their ability to process theories and knowledge. In these societies, correlations can be made between More's ideas presented in *Utopia*, and Swift's ideas in *Gulliver's Travels*.

Ultimately, it is essential for historians to utilize all sources when studying an era of history. Specifically looking at the field of intellectual history, there is much content to be accounted for in order to gain a full, "big picture" view of the era. Although literature cannot be utilized as a stand-alone source for historians, it is an incredibly important source to be used in addition to factual sources. It must not be overlooked when understanding the ways in which societies were thinking regarding current events. Literature offers a window into the bigger picture of intellectual history. Satire is a tool that has been utilized for centuries, and continues to offer historians a light into an otherwise dark corner of intellectual history.

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